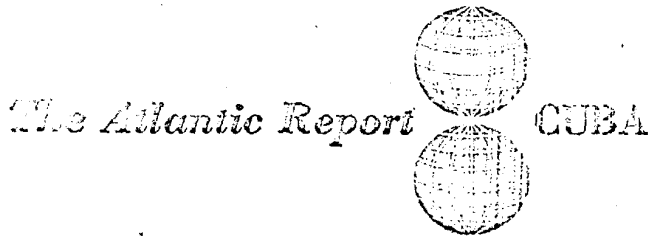

It has now been over a year and a half since the mysterious Ernesto ("Che") Guevara disappeared from Havana, leaving only a letter saying that "other lands in the world demand my modest efforts." Exactly what happened to that wandering professional revolutionary may always remain a mystery, but to Cubans the symbolism of his departure grows clearer with every passing day.

Wide-eyed and self-assured, Che was the personification of the revolution in action. He was the key figure of the period of romantic visions, noble dreams, and childlike mistakes, when prophets and saviors swept down from the mountains and transformed an entire society of seven million persons in their images.

But this is a Cuba already past. Cuba today is deep in the earnest business of fertilizer plants and shoe factories, of training cadres that often lack either revolutionary fervor or common sense, of food lines and political prisons. Utopia has now been postponed to sometime beyond 1970. Even Prime Minister Fidel Castro has changed. He watches his diet and he exercises; he is almost a food faddist. In the early days he rarely slept. He roved about the country doing everything tirelessly — slaying ideological dragons, cheering on the revolution, delivering eight- and ten-hour speeches, and wiping tears from children's eyes. Today he still roves a good deal, but he says he also gets a normal amount of sleep. His speeches are generally down to two hours now, and are more likely to be peppered with talk of hog-raising and tomato fields than with ideology.

He no longer visualizes a rapprochement with the United States; nor does he seek one. "Kennedy was an intelligent bandit," he says, "but Johnson is just a bandit." And he still looks with surprise at countries where the leaders change every four, five, or six years. "This is difficult," he remarks seriously. "After all, they just begin to learn, and somebody else comes in."

The name given to this era of the Cuban experiment is "the institutionalization of the revolution," and Castro says this means that "no one man is that important anymore . . . the revolution would go on under its own power." But what is actually happening is an unusual blend of the old "*personalismo*" — in the name of Fidel, of course — and "*burocrátismo*" — in the form of the new Party bureaucracy.

The bureaucrats are, by and large, former workers or peasants, and their loyalty to the revolution is cemented by their newfound dignity and privilege. "I have three children with scholarships and one studying to be a teacher," said Jesús Martínez, a wiry little worker and Party chief near the Bay of Pigs, who spoke of the changes the revolution had wrought in his life. "I never dreamed they would go to school. I was illiterate. Now I've reached the sixth grade, and I'll keep going." Later he walked into a tourist restaurant with some foreign guests and said, with a touching smile, "Before, I never dreamed I would go to a place like this in all my life."

Sometime after the beginning of 1967, the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba will be held. The Party is in fact still being put together, with about 90 percent of its members nominated at local factories, offices, and schools, and 10 percent nominated by top Party functionaries. These are to be the "cadres" of the Cuban state.

The cadres are supposed to be constituted of Cubans on whom the regime can rely for loyalty and incorruptibility, but like everything else in Cuba, they are susceptible to influence from outside. Last winter when the cadres were still being organized, the Chinese, whom the regime thought it could trust, began sending anti-Soviet propaganda over the heads of the Cuban state directly to the cadres. It was this, and not rice, that prompted Cuba's rupture with China.

Castro and the people

Little by little, the Communist bureaucracy is sinking into Cuban life, organizing it at every level. But the bureaucracy frightens Castro, who says with wonderment, "Some people spend all their

lives going to meetings." Asked if he goes to the office, he wrinkled the substantial nose that juts out above his free-floating beard, and said with distaste, "Never! I think the office is a very unwholesome life. I learned that after the revolution, when I used to go into the office and receive everyone. Of every hundred who came, ten deserved to see me. I gave that up and went out among the people."

Today he operates in a cluster of headquarters — including an apartment in downtown Havana, a beach house that stands behind a band of pine trees on Santa Maria beach, and several other hideouts — when he is not roaming about the countryside.

He scorns the faceless bureaucrats who make decisions based on rules and not on the sentiments of the moment. He heaps praise on a recent Cuban film, "The Death of a Bureaucrat," which is an effective satire on bureaucracy. "See it," he tells everyone he meets; "this could happen to us."

In 1960, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre visited Cuba, and with disarming ingenuousness remarked that as there were no trained cadres, the revolution was some form of spontaneous new political expression. Today one observes enthusiasm among the people but also a well-trained, somewhat sinister cheering squad. The committees for the defense of the revolution, which in some towns comprise half the population, report everything that occurs on every block. The militia and the armed forces, kept in a psychopathic state of alert against real and imagined enemies, stand watch on the shores of "*la patria*." "Why do we have guns?" a newsreel announcer asks. "Because we have an enemy." The picture shifts and shows a Negro hanging from the Statue of Liberty.

Old Communists fade away

As in all police-state mass movements, the absence of elections (let alone opinion polls) makes it impossible to determine where the spontaneity ends and force begins. But one loose estimate is discussed: there are between 20,000 and 80,000 political prisoners.

Within the ranks of those who still see Castro as a heroic figure, there are factions which disagree on almost everything else. There are members of his original 26th of July Movement who fought in the revolution against Batista, despise the Communists, and are now living in quiet desperation. There are fanatical young "New Communists." There are a number of opportunists, who are rabid Marxists now but fought the Marxists six years ago. And there are aging, plodding Communists, holding on because they managed to step adroitly out of Stalinism and into Fidelism.

The "Old Communists," the handful of men who were Party members when Fidel was a boy and who looked at the whole business of fighting Batista as romantic nonsense, have proved to be good at bureaucracy. Yet they are in an equivocal, insecure position. There is at present not one Old Communist on the eight-man politburo, which is the most powerful entity in Cuba, not counting Castro himself. And there is the tangential but significant fact that after several years of undermining his 26th of July Movement, Castro is now upgrading it.

But none of this proves what some European diplomats in Cuba hope: that Cuba is arriving at "national socialism," in the manner of Yugoslavia, and opening up. On the contrary, it is ideologically one of the tightest countries in the Communist bloc, right behind China and Albania. "We do not believe in fictions," says Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, one of the few Old Communists still in office. "Fictions" in his terms are elections to soviets modeled on the U.S.S.R., and multiparty parliaments, as in Poland or Hungary.

The downgrading of the Old Communists and the rhetorical upgrading of the remnants of the 26th of July Movement sound less like an outburst of liberalism within the regime than like the rumble of solidification. Castro may still be trying to build, as he says, a "Cuban Communism," but there is very little that is Yugoslav about it.

In fact, if the 26th of July Movement is back in style, it is because it has been communized to Castro's taste. He may feel that the Old Communists follow too closely Moscow's line that Cuba should spend more time on internal development and less time on fomenting revolutions in Latin America. But though Moscow's aid to Cuba has been estimated to be as much as $1 million a day, the Kremlin's exact influence in Cuba is always an enigma. It is said that Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos, very much a bureaucrat and reputed to be the Soviet's favorite, has gained in power, yet it has also been rumored that Foreign Minister Raúl Roa, from the original Castro group, may step into the presidency.

The Cubans have much the same sense of persecution as the Chinese; they see enemies without and within. Only last March Commandante (Major) Rolando Cubela, one of the highest-ranking officers in the rebel army, was sentenced to thirty years in prison on a charge of plotting to assassinate Castro. The government claimed it was a CIA plot, and Western diplomats in Havana said the evidence indicated this was true.

In the same month, one hundred top officials of the Ministries of Industries and Foreign Relations were sent to be "re-educated." They allegedly drank, told counterrevolutionary jokes, and whored too much. "It is not because we are puritans," says Castro; "but we just cannot have this sort of thing." Early in September, about half of the six hundred persons in the Foreign Ministry were replaced.

Castro needs desperately today to maintain enthusiasm, but if he cannot — and 800,000 are listed as wanting to leave — there is always compulsion: the armed forces, and the revolutionary tribunals, not to mention Military Units for the Aid of Production. These last are forced-labor camps where "unreliable elements," such as priests, homosexuals, and "lumpen," Castro's favorite word to describe teen-age loiterers, go to work for three years in the cane fields for $7 a month.

Report on Cuba

Economically, the regime has emerged chastened from its first romantic outburst after independence. It was Che Guevara who perused lists of Cuban imports, and scouted Eastern Europe for means of financing factories to produce locally the products that Cuba imported. Cuba was to become industrialized in one fell swoop, and cease subsisting off the humbled sugar monoculture imposed by the United States. But Che, who was then industrial czar, went ahead with plans for industrialization without first looking into the matter of importing raw materials, and when he did, he found they cost more than the imported finished products. Then reality set in.

Back to sugar

Today the country has returned to monoculture with a vengeance. The agricultural budget grew from $190,752,000 in 1965 to $310,822,000 in 1966, while the budget of the Ministry of Industries fell by 5 percent. Money is being put into beef, fisheries, the merchant marine, and agriculture-related industries.

Castro has promised that the sugar crop, which was at a low of 4,500,000 tons this year, will reach its pre-revolutionary level of 7,000,000 tons by 1967 and 10,000,000 by 1970, and that the economy will then explode into all sorts of other investments, such as nickel. But foreign observers, while agreeing that some of Castro's present plans can succeed, think that the sugar-crop goals are overly optimistic. Meanwhile, shortages are excruciating. Rationing is tight. In a country which used to export coffee, there is no coffee. There is no fruit in Fruti-Cuba stores.

But social advances continue, particularly in the fields of health and education. There are hospitals now all through the island, and the spread of education has been extraordinary. There are 100,000 students on full state scholarships, and soon there will be 200,000.

Still, the story has hardly ended on the note on which it began eight years ago. This year on July 2 Castro devoted his entire speec

to the argument that the Cuban revolution was "the revolution" for Latin America. But it sounded a little desperate. "We are able to say that we are right," he cried. "We are sure the peoples of Latin America will say, 'Yes, this road was right. Yes, we are right.' "

No love for guerrillas

But the Castroite Venezuelan guerrillas, fighting a representative, popular, and rich government, are not about to take Caracas. The traditional Communist parties in Latin America, who pre-date Castro's do-it-yourself socialism by thirty and forty years and are actually very stuffy and conservative, are horrified at Castro's guerrilla ideas, as is well known in Havana.

The continent even doubts that the Soviets encourage Castro's "revolution-spreading." The Tricontinental Conference, held in Havana in January to support guerrilla warfare in Latin America, now has semi-permanent headquarters in Havana's Hotel Riviera, with expenses paid by Cuba. But the Soviets, who signed the final pugnacious statement, immediately sent emissaries to Latin-American capitals to assure them that they wanted nothing to do with any guerrillas. It is probable that they supported the conference only to try and take the leadership of the underdeveloped world away from China. And meanwhile, for all their aid and comfort for Cuba, the Soviets are also giving technical aid to Chile's President Frei and his Christian Democratic government, Castro's hated competitor for leftist leadership in Latin America.

Cuba, then, is engaged in the depressing work of hanging on. Castro and the Cuban leaders know that if they cannot succeed economically and free Cuba from Russia, if they cannot undo the extraordinary miscalculations of the Guevara period, if they cannot train efficient administrative cadres, and if they cannot overcome the Soviet Union's determination to keep violent revolution peacefully confined to Cuba, the Cuban revolution will simply go down in Latin-American [illegible] curiosity.